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CURRENT SUPPORT BRIEF

TOP SOVIET AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIST UNDER FIRE

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND REPORTS

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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TOP SOVIET AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIST UNDER FIRE

A.I. Tulupnikov, the top Soviet agricultural economist and a high-level advisor to ousted agricultural minister Matskevich, has been criticized severely in the Soviet press recently and may become a victim of the shake-up in agricultural leadership now in progress. Tulupnikov, currently director of the Agricultural Economics Institute of the USSR Ministry of Agriculture and chairman of the Committee on Agricultural Problems of the UN Economic Commission for Europe, is a symbol of the more conservative economic and scientific group which Khrushchev apparently distrusts and scorns.

Time and again in recent years, Khrushchev has exhibited his obsession with "practical" results in agriculture and his contempt for empirical evidence which does not support his policies. In 1957, for example, Khrushchev cast aside the expert opinion of his economists when he launched his program to catch up with the US in per capita meat and milk production. Khrushchev initiated his MTS reorganization without adequate preparation and Tulupnikov, who opposed the reorganization, is now charged with having failed to solve problems which arose from it. Tulupnikov has in the past also voiced reservations about Khrushchev's favorite New Lands and corn programs; two vigorously executed but hastily conceived projects.

Criticism of Tulupnikov and his Economics Institute began on the eve of the December 1959 Central Committee Plenum on agriculture. A 20 December 1959 Sovetskaya Rossiya article charged the Institution with opposing the MTS reorganization, a charge which could easily have proved fatal. Apparently the Institute took the position that the collective farms could not afford to purchase the MTS equipment. The Institute was accused of having failed to solve the host of problems which arose from the MTS reorganization and of not publicizing the benefits to the collective farms of the new organization. The authors of the article also charged the Institute with ignoring the politically popular intercollective farm movement. Tulupnikov, however, managed to survive these charges and the case against him and his associates was not reopened until November 1960.

The 29 November 1960 issue of Literaturnaya Gazeta linked Tulupnikov with the scapegoat dismissal of an employee of the Ministry of Agriculture by Matskevich. This scandal centered around a Soviet agricultural brochure which Tulupnikov had co-authored for distribution at the 1958 World's Fair in Brussels. The brochure, which contained "statements detrimental to the USSR," was hastily withdrawn from circulation. This brochure is not available but, because the opening of the fair coincided with the unexpected abolition of the MTS system, it is possible that the "detrimental statements" appearing in the brochure were statements upholding that system.

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The following month, an article in the 29 December 1960 issue of Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta criticized Tulupnikov's Agricultural Economics journal for divorcing itself from current problems, such as the pace of socialization in the countryside and the organization of production in the New Lands, and for relinquishing responsibility in these matters to literary figures such as I. Vinnichenko and V. Ovechkin. Again, Tulupnikov was charged with failure to solve the problems of wages, prices, credit, farm supply, and management which resulted from the MTS reorganization.

A particularly severe attack on Tulupnikov and his Institute appeared in the 7 January 1961 issue of the Soviet agricultural newspaper, Selskaya Zhizn, under the heading, "Smoke Without Fire." The author of this article, V. Mikheyev, reports the results of a long conversation with Tulupnikov, a conversation which Mikheyev characterizes as, "much talk, little said." Mikheyev describes the voluminous work of the Institute as superficial, repetitious, inaccurate, and lacking in practical recommendations to kolkhoz and sovkhos workers. He asks how long the Ministry of Agriculture, the Academy of Agricultural Science, and the Institute itself will continue to suffer such ineffective direction. The seriousness of the charges makes it appear that the case against Tulupnikov and his associates will be made to stick this time, especially since Matskevich is no longer in a position to protect him.

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